



POPEY 

Provincial Outreach Program
for the Early Years

www.popey.ca

Supporting SEL and Playful Literacy Learning Through Outdoor Learning in K-3

Presenters:
Lisa Thomas & Jen Kelly

Wednesday, February 1st

3:15 – 4:15pm

Today we are exploring...



Strategies, resources and ideas to incorporate outdoor learning and time in nature into meaningful & connected K-3 literacy learning experiences

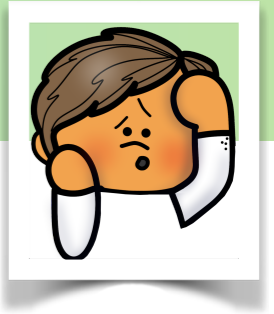




In our families and our schools, a **sense of belonging** comes from laughing, sharing and learning together. Equally important is the sense of belonging that arises from **being immersed in the natural world**. All children should be given the chance to recognize that they are **part of a larger community of other living things**. Building community is about **creating long-term relationships**, not only with each other but **with the natural world**. And like any relationship this involves commitment, time and effort.

Monkman & Rodenburg,
The Big Book of Nature Activities:
A Year-Round Guide to Outdoor Learning

Nature Numbers to Ponder



The number of advertising messages a child encounters in a day

The number of hours the average North American child sits in front of a screen each year

The number of corporate logos the average child can identify

The number of native plants and animals the average child can identify

Purposeful Play & Inquiry



The process of **inquiry** is a **perspective** on learning that begins with an **intense curiosity**, a curiosity that generates **close observation, noticings, wonderings, and questions** that lead to **new** and interesting **ideas**.

Inquiry injects a **PLAY MINDSET** into all learning because it is a process that occurs when playing.

Setting off to **answer big questions** through **observation** and **experimentation** is a more formal description of an inherently **natural process**.

A Continuum of Play for Educators



Adapted from Pyle and Danniels, 2017

Choose 2 types of play from above, and share your thoughts on how they could connect to outdoor learning opportunities.

Connecting Learning to Land and Place

Making connections with place in English First Peoples courses is an integral part of bringing **Indigenous perspectives** into the classroom.

Peoples' **perspectives** are influenced by the **land** they are **connected** to. That means including **experiential learning** in local natural and cultural situations.

Wherever possible, look for **opportunities** to **take learning outside** in order for students to make **connections** with the **land and place** they are **situated on**.



This may be as **simple** as a **nature walk** or an **outdoor story reading**, or it may involve a more **complex** study of a local habitat or environment.

I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of...



An exploration routine that:

- * supports students as they develop a mindset of curiosity and use language to actively and directly engage with the natural world
- * supports social and emotional learning by offering skills for reflection and by setting a tone of learning, collaborating, and listening
- * helps educators to create an inclusive and culturally relevant learning environment, by scaffolding cognitive thinking skills
- * encourages students to reflect on, value, and share relevant connections from their lived experiences and perspectives

I Notice, I Wonder, It Reminds Me Of...



Students will...

- ★ Increase curiosity about and directly engage with aspects of the natural world.
- ★ Make observations, ask questions, and relate findings to past experiences.
- ★ Learn that descriptive observations are distinct from statements of opinion or identification.

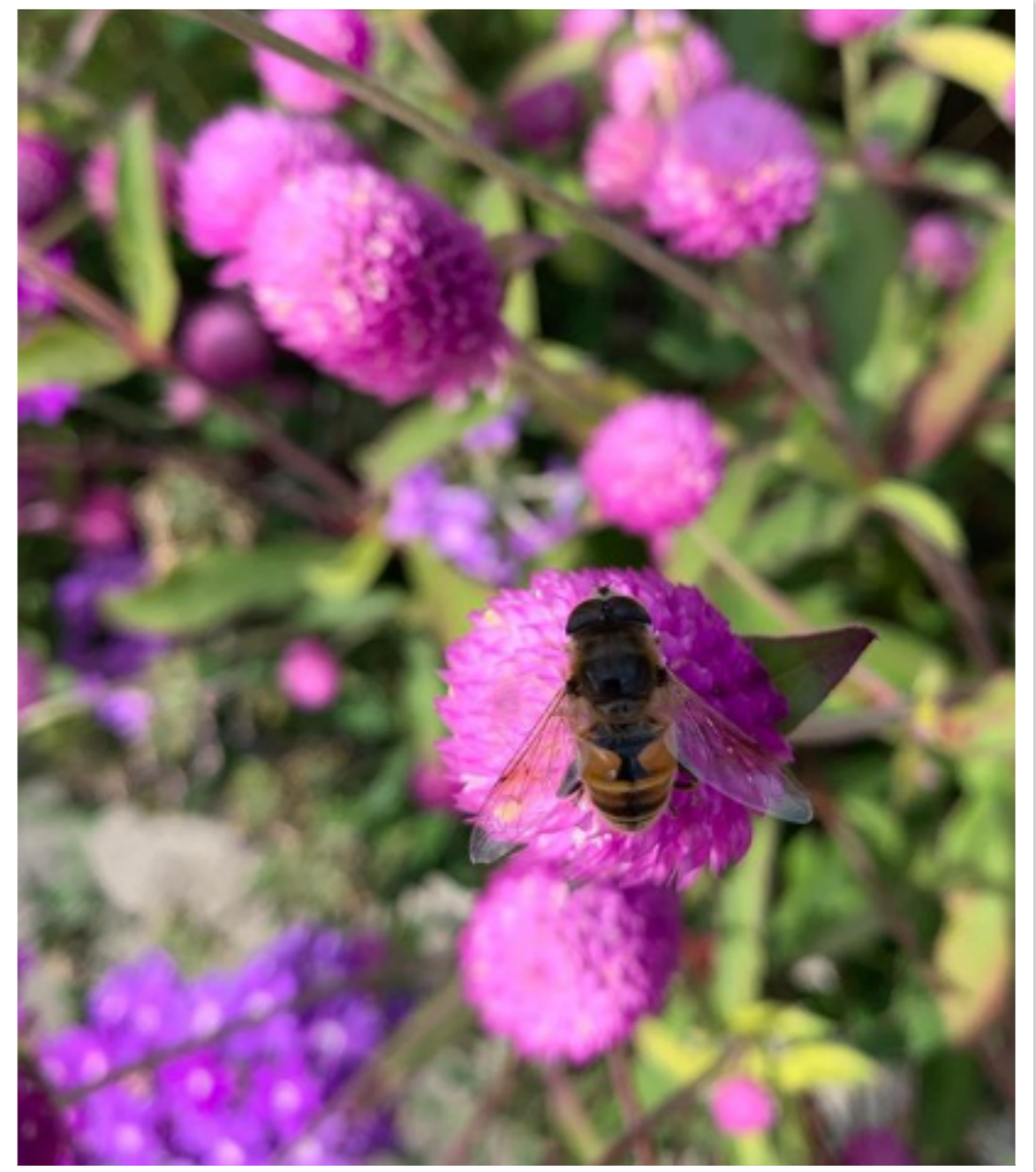
“I see no more than you, but I have trained myself to notice what I see.”

– Sherlock Holmes

I Notice ...

I Wonder ...

It Reminds Me Of...





People build connection and reconnection to land, culture, community, and place

Children develop a sense of place when they connect with their local communities and outdoor environment. Early learning is “of a place” when children and educators engage with local histories with respectful curiosity and a desire to contribute and share. Indigenous peoples have been the knowledge keepers of these places for hundreds of generations.

Indigenous languages are some of the voices of these places.

The Walking Curriculum

The simple act of taking a walk can emphasize the importance of place.

The Motion Walk

Use as many senses as possible to complete this challenge. What is moving around you? What is on the move?

Besides seeing movement, how else can you tell something is moving?

The Line Walk

Find a human made line. Follow it. Where does it lead? Find a natural line (a track from an animal perhaps) – where does it lead? Once you return inside, visualize the lines you followed. Try to draw them and make a map of your walk.

The History Walk

What evidence can you find on your walk of something that happened here before this moment? Use words to describe in as much detail what you think happened here. Pretend you are a detective and you are figuring out a situation.

Leading a Walk or a Hike

Students can engage with the natural world by...

Means of Engagement

Noticing
Identifying
Sketching
Labelling

Living Things to Notice, Identify & Describe

Birds
Mammals
Amphibians
Invertebrates
Fish
Trees & Shrubs
Wildflowers

Descriptive Language & Communication

Qualities
Attributes
Describing Words
Questions

Leading a Walk or a Hike: Some Pointers

Getting past the barriers to outdoor learning...

1. Dress Well

2. What to bring

a teacher backpack/bag with crayons, pencils, pencil crayons, erasers, nature journals, blank cards/notebooks, ziploc bags/jars for collecting samples, digital camera or smartphone – and backpacks for kids so they can be hands free

3. Hush mode

at times, you may want total silence to see/hear many kinds of animals; set it up so when you say “we’re now in hush mode” all talking stops and walking is done quietly

Leading a Walk or a Hike: Some Pointers

Getting past the barriers to outdoor learning...

4. Halfway past

if you see something you want to point out, keep walking until about half the group has passed it; then stop and step back to the middle of the group to discuss it, so all can see it

5. Kid containment

if you have a large group, designate a leader and a sweep

6. Getting back together

have a pre-arranged signal like a bell, a whistle, or a special word to bring everyone back to the meeting spot

7. Transitions

give kids a task as you walk – “How many natural noises can you hear between now and our next stop?” or do a scavenger hunt to focus their attention

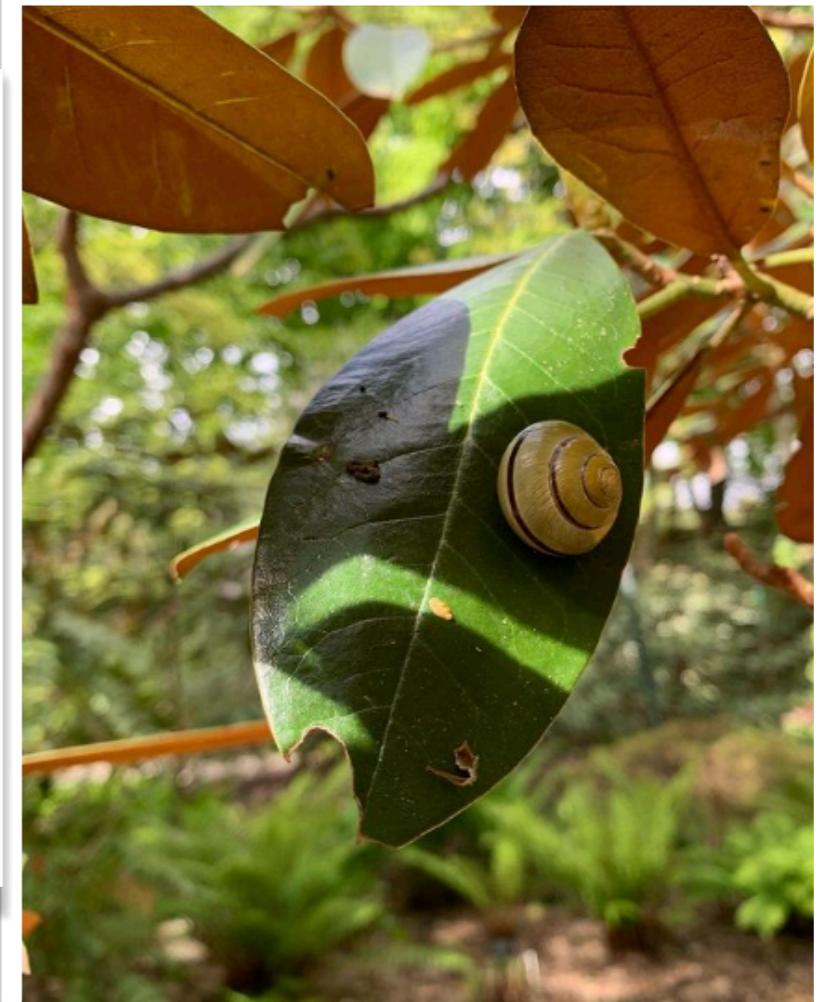
Sit Spots: Storytelling inspired by observing nature



- * self-selected spots that students can return to many times
- * promotes careful observation and reflection
- * stories can be factual or imaginary, or a blend of both
- * stories can blend what they're seeing in the natural world with their own lives – e.g. *maybe that spider is a really good drummer*
- * students might imagine what plants or animals are thinking or feeling; what would they say if they could talk?
- * repeated visits to these sit spots can also highlight changes in the seasons and how these plants and animals are impacted

Sit spots for cultivating our powers of observation

- * Choose one photo as your virtual sit spot
- * What do you notice, wonder, or connect to?
- * Write 2–3 thoughts about your chosen photo in the ChatBox



Some “Back Pocket” Outdoor Activities

Possible activities you can do during an informal walk:

- * stop every once in a while and **closely investigate** a fallen tree trunk, a log, or under a stone; areas where there are different kinds of moss are good; closely investigate leaf veins, flower parts, seeds, tree bark, etc.
- * **collect natural objects** such as rocks, leaves, seeds and bark of different shapes and colours; do a **bark rubbing** or a **sketch**
- * **sit and listen** for several minutes – in complete silence – and then compare notes on what you heard. What were the natural sounds?
- * scan the area for signs of **birds**, including holes in trees, feathers, nests, and droppings
- * do the same for **mammals**, such as tracks, scat, half-eaten cones, fur, bark gnawed off shrubs, or trees felled by beavers
- * follow a bearing – using a **compass**, strike out in one direction, then crouch down every ten paces and find out what is living there

Kinesthetic & Artistic Connections to Nature

Bark & Leaf Rubbings



Tips for Outdoor Learning



- ☑ SAFETY FIRST – have a safety plan and emergency protocols
- ☑ FIRST AID KIT & CELL PHONE – important school numbers saved
- ☑ SET BOUNDARIES – physical boundaries students know & respect
- ☑ STUDENT CALL BACK – a well-practiced signal to return
- ☑ SAFETY GAMES – fun games to practice safety drills and plans
- ☑ CHILD DRIVEN – follow students' interests and curiosities
- ☑ ALLOW TIME FOR FREE EXPLORATION – discovery & exploration
- ☑ SIT SPOTS – student chosen, for quiet reflection

Read Alouds to Support Outdoor Learning



National Geographic Readers: In the Forest

By: Shira Evans

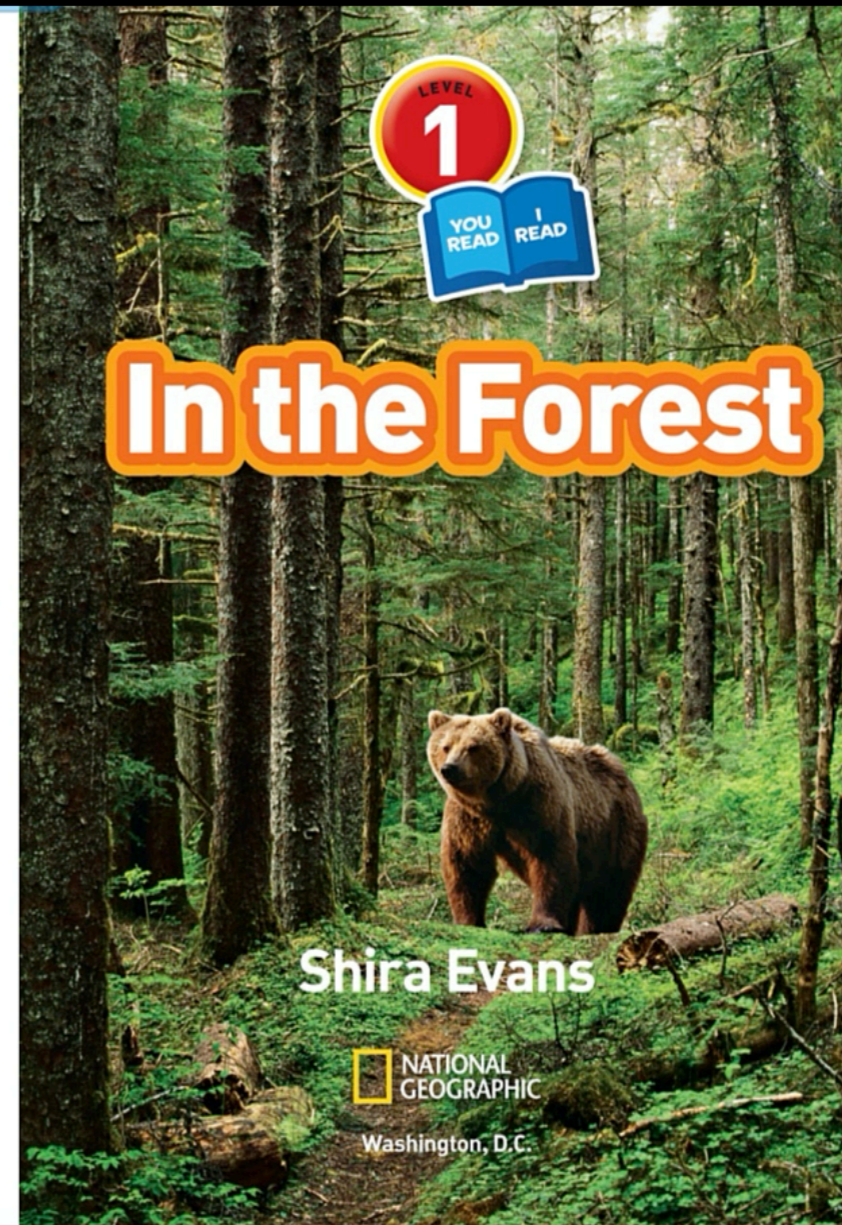
What kinds of interesting critters live amongst the forest trees?

5-7 Age Range 20* Level ⓘ

Favorite

Assign

Hide



Reflect & Share - Supporting Connections

Choose **one** of these to answer in the chat box:

- * What does it mean to connect with land and space?
- * What can we help our students notice, wonder & explore?
- * How can we support our students' communication and thinking skills as they interact with the world around them?
- * How can we help students ground their stories in land and place?

Time in Nature Increases...

- ★happiness
- ★healthy risk-taking
- ★stress reduction
- ★self confidence
- ★resilience
- ★well being
- ★freedom
- ★Oh, and it's free



“No one will protect what they don't care about;
and no one will care about what they've never experienced”

–Sir David Attenborough

Educators collaborate with children and their families as partners in research. This means educators are continually observing, listening, and experimenting with an openness to the unexpected.



Sources

Info Links

more info links are available on our [website](#)

[BC Ministry of Education's Play Today: A Guide for Families](#)

[BC Early Learning Framework](#)

[Beetles Project – Resources for Outdoor Science Programs](#)

[In Our Own Words: Bringing Authentic First Peoples Content to the K–3 Classroom – FNEESC](#)

[Outdoor Learning Tips – Environmental Educators PSA of BC](#)

[Sit Spots: Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children](#)

Books

The Walking Curriculum – Judson

The Big Book of Nature Activities – Monkman & Rodenburg

Purposeful Play – Mraz, Porcelli & Tyler

Learning with Nature – Robb, Mew & Packham

Videos

more videos are available on our [YouTube channel](#)

[Bringing Core Content to Life With Outdoor Education](#)



We hope to see you again soon...

Wednesday, February 8th – Story Workshop

Wednesday, February 15th – Literacy, SEL, and Global Citizenship

Wednesday, February 22nd – Fostering Curiosity Through Conversation



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